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School Bus Safety

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Parents and caregivers rely on school buses to safely take children to and from school. A child's safety depends upon the driver to properly operate the bus and ensure the special visual bus signals are in good working order. Safety also depends heavily on motorists' obedience to the laws for approaching a school bus when loading or unloading passengers, regardless of location.

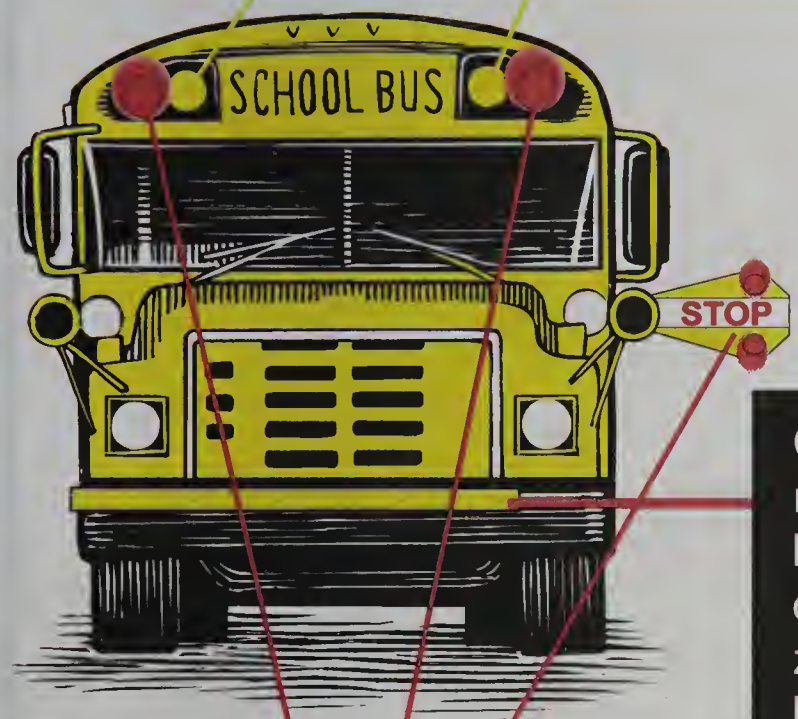
Millions of children in the United States ride safely to and from school on school buses each day. Although school buses are the safest way to get them to school, an average of 33 school-age children die in school bus-related traffic crashes each year.

Most of those killed are pedestrians five to seven years of age. They are hit in danger zones around the bus (see figure A on back), either by a passing vehicle or by the school bus itself. It is illegal for a car to pass a bus with its red light flashing.

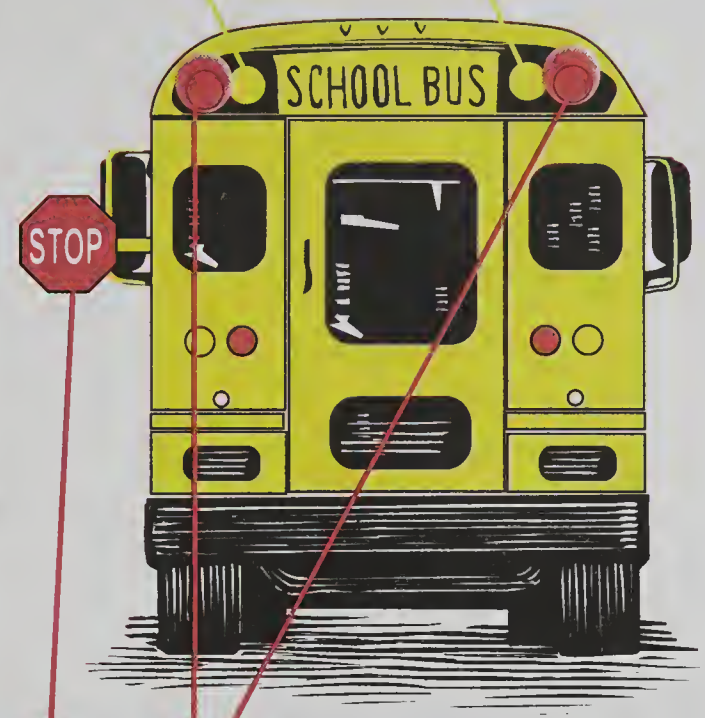
(NHTSA, Traffic Safety Facts 1999)

hat the law says & safety tips:

A school bus' flashing yellow lights are a warning the bus will soon be stopping to load or unload passengers.



Crossing control arms are required on all school buses. This device keeps children out of the danger zone and the bus driver's blind spot.



Coming from either direction you must **STOP** when you see these signals displayed

Exception: If a school bus is on a highway having four or more lanes which permit at least two lanes of traffic to travel in the opposite direction, a vehicle approaching the stopped school bus in the opposite direction need not stop.

The extended **STOP** signal arm and flashing red lights advise motorists the bus has stopped and is loading/unloading passengers.

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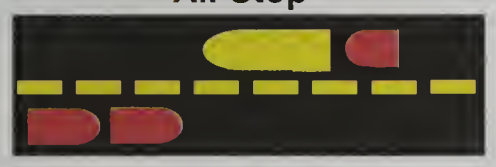
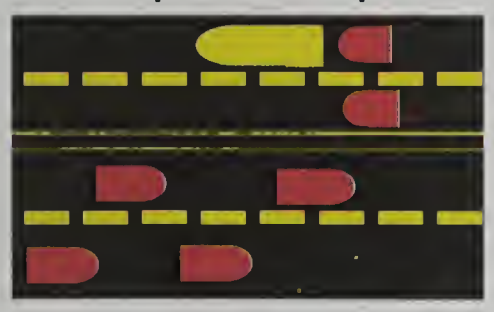
On two-lane roads, all traffic in both directions of travel must stop when meeting a stopped school bus.

All Stop



On roads with four lanes or more, with traffic in both directions, vehicles traveling in the opposite direction of a stopped school bus need not stop.

Top Lanes Stop



Bottom Lanes Continue

Motorists may proceed after stopping for a bus if one of the following occurs: the bus resumes motion, the bus driver signals the motorist to proceed, or the flashing lights are turned off and the stop arm signal is no longer extended.

Note: In response to a signed complaint, the owner of the vehicle, if not the operator at the time of the alleged violation, is responsible for identifying the driver at the time. Failure to do so will result in the transfer of the violation to the registered owner.

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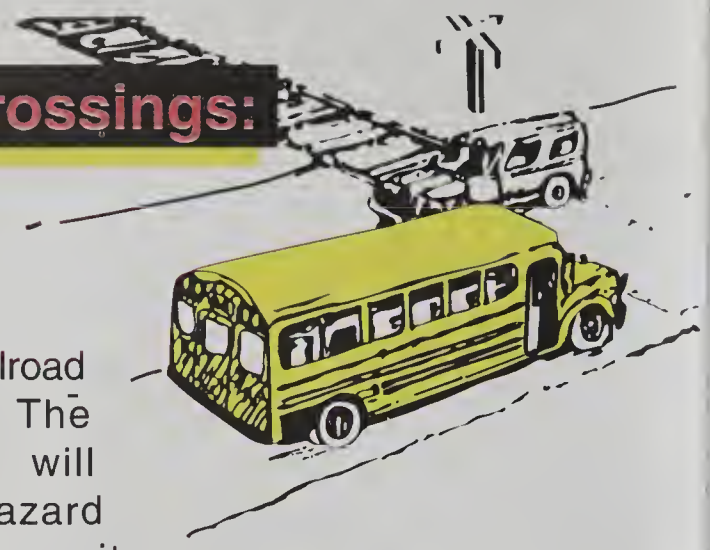
Railroad Crossings:



State law requires school buses to stop for all railroad crossings. The school bus will display the hazard warning lights as it stops momentarily to determine if it is safe to cross. If you are approaching the bus from the front, you may proceed past with caution. If you are approaching the bus from the rear, the law prohibits driving over the center line to pass if the bus is within 100 feet of a railroad crossing. For safety, always leave plenty of room for the bus to maneuver or back up in case of an emergency.

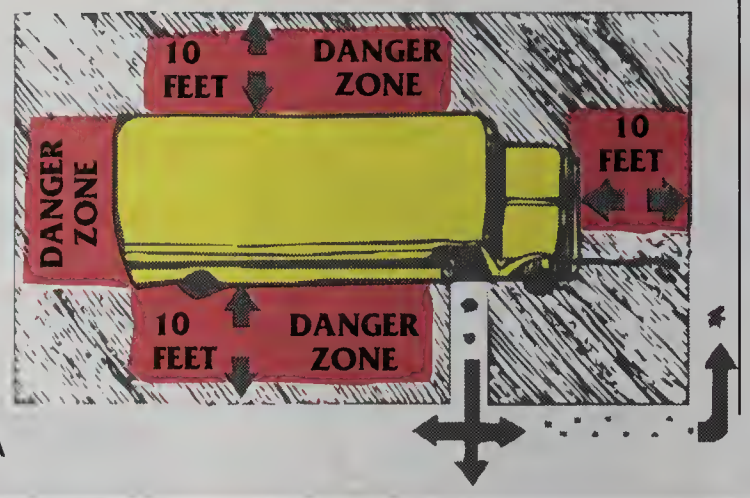


Figure A

CAUTION:

The majority of children injured or killed in pupil transportation are injured outside the bus. Most are struck by motorists who fail to stop for the flashing red lights and extended stop arm. This area around the bus is often referred to as the **"DANGER ZONE."**

Bus Drivers/Teachers

Bus safety will be considered important to students if bus drivers/teachers show an interest and emphasize its importance. Rules of conduct on the bus and principles of walking safely when loading and unloading should be discussed in class periodically. Students should be cautioned not to play while the bus is operating or while waiting at the designated stop. Students should also be advised to follow the directions of the bus driver. When boarding the bus, they should only cross the street upon the signal of the driver or crossing guard. Once aboard, passengers should practice "classroom behavior" to keep distractions for the bus driver to a minimum.

To schedule a program for your school or group, please contact the Safety Education Unit at (217) 524-2525, or contact your nearest Illinois State Police Headquarters.

Penalties for Illegally Passing a school bus

First offense - mandatory minimum fine of $150 and 3-month suspension of driver's license. **Second offense or subsequent conviction within five years** - mandatory minimum fine of $500 and one year suspension of driver's license. A motorist cited for illegally passing a school bus is not eligible for court supervision.

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George H. Ryan
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